(b) and (c) Oil Companies join hands with PCRA in measures related to energy conservation among the masses. From time to time, Oil Companies also sponsor related activities in accordance with their respective corporate policy and procedures. The suggestions made at (b) and (c) have been noted for further consideration.

ONGC'S LNG Plant in Russia

†3515. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Oil and Natural Gas Commission is considering on the possibility of installing Liquefied Natural Gas Plant in Russia;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC)/ ONGC Videsh Ltd. have no proposal at present for setting up a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Plant in Russia.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Fund for exploration of crude

3516. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the quantity of crude oil produced in the country in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 respectively;

(b) the targets for crude oil production in this current year;

(c) whether Government have any plans to increase exploration for oil and hydrocarbons in the country; and

(d) if so, the details of plans to fund expanded exploration for crude oil in the country?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Crude oil production in the country during the years 2003-04 and 2004-05 was 33.37 and 33.98 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) respectively.

(b) The target set (Budget Estimate) for the production of crude oil for the current year, 2005-06 is 34.45 MMT.

(c) and (d) For exploration of hydrocarbons the Government has taken the following steps :-

(i) New areas for further exploration have been opened up under the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP). Under NELP, 90 exploration blocks have been awarded to various companies in four rounds of exploratory bidding held till now. The exploration work in NELP blocks has led to 19 oil/gas discoveries so far. 20 more exploration blocks have been offered for international competitive bidding under the fifth round of NELP.

(ii) Accelerated exploration programme by National Oil Companies (NOCs) in areas awarded to them on a nomination basis.

The funds required for exploration in the blocks awarded under NELP Production Sharing Contracts are arranged by the companies to whom the blocks are awarded Investment thus made is cost recoverable from the oil saved and sold, once commercial production commences.

As regards the national oil companies, namely, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd. (OIL), they plan to spend about Rs. 3599 crores and Rs. 571 crores respectively during 2005-06 for exploration activities.

Sale of equity of MRPL

3517. SHRI S. M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have signed any agreement with ARAMCO to sell equity in MRPL;

(b) if so, the details of this joint venture between ARAMCO and ONGC owned MRPL;

(c) the gains to the country from such an agreement;